

NAME THIS NEWSLETTER!

Welcome to the first e-newsletter from FLO/MHN's partnership! As you can see, we need a name for this monthly offering. Please send your suggestions for a name to FLOAskUT@state.gov. And, feel free to submit questions – yours may get answered in this space!

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: My loved one is coming home – finally! – for a much deserved R&R. The whole extended family and our close friends in the neighborhood want to have a big Welcome Home party but I'd rather go to a romantic Bed & Breakfast for the first weekend. What would you recommend?

A: Please, do everyone a favor and wait a week – for either! Folks coming out of these high-risk environments usually want to sleep for several days – it does not necessarily mean that they want to avoid their family, have lost interest in intimacy, or are clinically depressed – they are just tired! In addition to the normal jet-lag, it often takes 24 hours or more just to get to the commercial airport to start their flight(s) home. Plus, once they get out of the high-stress environment, it is natural to 'collapse' like a puppet whose strings have been cut. It takes a while for the adrenaline to wash out of their system – and will not happen completely until they are home 'for good.'

What is this? This electronic newsletter comes to you thanks to a grant from the Una Chapman Cox Foundation. The Family Liaison Office has contracted with Managed Health Network to provide specialized support services to employees and family members experiencing an Unaccompanied Tour. Each month MHN will prepare a number of educational articles to increase your knowledge of and enhance your skills for ways to cope with stresses of balancing work and life. FLO will provide a page specific to families separated by service at a high-risk unaccompanied post. COMING NEXT MONTH: suggestions for items to pack into "care" packages; Coping with Holiday Stress. We welcome your ideas (and will gladly review short manuscripts) for inclusion in future editions. Please send to FLOAskUT@state.gov.

What else does MHN provide us? The e-newsletter is in addition to the 24/7 telephonic assessment and referral service (1-800-213-5811) and customized Web portal (www.members.mhn.com; use 'unaccompaniedtour' for the Country Code and register with an ID and password of your choosing) provided by MHN. NOTE: MHN is operating these services on the honor system – they DO NOT have a list of employee names, nor will they gather and report to us who calls or logs in. We set this up to be as confidential as we could make it.

HOW DO I ACCESS THESE SERVICES?

Join us in a free Conference Call and Web cast on Thursday, October 5, at 12 noon Eastern Time for an interactive Orientation session. Go to www.raindance.com and click "join conference" – scroll down to "Registrationless Conference Call" and enter your name, email address, and the Conference Code: 2016466. If your computer is set up with speakers and microphone, you may "interact over web" or else opt to "interact by phone." Dial 1-800-531-3250 and enter the same Conference Code when prompted. This is a toll free number within the US – if you do not have a US based phone line, it might be best to work over the web exclusively. Either way, participants will be able to ask us questions. Who are "us"? Nan Leininger, Program Specialist for Unaccompanied Tours; Ann Greenberg, Director of Family Liaison Office; and Cynthia Compel from Managed Health Network.

Who gets it? All USG (or under COM authority) direct-hire FS and CS employees on long-term TDY or PCS assigned to Unaccompanied Tours and their family members. As with all our services, "family" is used in the broadest possible sense to include parents, spouses, partners,

siblings, and children of all ages. In order to maintain your privacy, the newsletter will be provided to FLO electronically and we will handle distribution. Please contact FLOAskUT@state.gov if you wish to be added to or taken off the distribution list.

Why now? October marks the first anniversary of the creation of FLO's Program Specialist for Unaccompanied Tours position, which focuses exclusively on employees and family members experiencing separation due to service in high-risk environments. It has been a year of growth, development, accomplishment – and some frustration, too.

DOS Highlights: Last May, the Separate Maintenance Allowance was increased by 18% for those on Involuntary SMA (and discussions are underway to consider another increase); families returning to the US on ISMA are now allowed to bring their POV (provided it meets US standards); a 10-day period of Home Leave is available for those completing a 12-month high-risk assignment; adult Eligible Family Members may seek employment at several unaccompanied posts; Riyadh will soon have a CLO (Community Liaison Office) – hopefully other UT posts will follow; and employees going to Iraq for 12 months may be able to go on “TDY” status and leave their families at their previous post.

FLO Highlights:

OCT. '05: Nan W. Leininger, MSW and “veteran spouse” of the Foreign Service since 1971 with extensive overseas and CLO experience, hired to fill new position. First goal: identify and reach out to the families. It quickly became apparent how difficult it would be (and, unfortunately, to a large extent still is) to find the families, scattered across the US and even around the world.

DEC. '05: FLO hosted over 50 members of the InterAgency RoundTable in December 2005, sharing issues, ideas and resources for the support of families on Unaccompanied Tours. A smaller working group has continued to meet. FLO began briefing the DSAC IRAQ (Diplomatic Security Anti-Terrorism Courses) at FSI on a weekly basis.

MAR/APR '06: The UT Program Specialist visited Baghdad and Riyadh to gain a better understanding of the environments and issues experienced by employees during Unaccompanied Tours. Part of her education came from breaking the news (of the impending trip) to family and friends. Reactions ranged from “That sucks” to “What more could you ask from life [than a chance] to leave something behind that has made a difference?”

MAY '06: FLO chaired a panel on issues and support services for families on Unaccompanied Tours at the May 2006 Foreign Affairs Day. During the month, 200 individualized Certificates and Medals of Recognition were mailed to children whose parents were serving on Unaccompanied Tours.

SEPT. '06: An electronic Needs Assessment Survey made available to employees and family members. THE DEADLINE HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO OCTOBER 9. If you have not yet participated in this anonymous and confidential survey, please go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=282082520872>.

OCT. '06: The Program Specialist for Unaccompanied Tour is being converted to a full-time position. Contact Nan at LeiningerNW@state.gov or call 1-800-440-0397; (202) 647-1076.